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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 002789

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TURKEY/EU - FM GUL TO EU: GIVE US OUR DATE WITH DESTINY

Classified By: Ambassador Sobel for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: In a low-key visit to The Hague on October 25, Turkish FM Gul reportedly complained about provisions of the EC's October 6 report that highlighted Turkey's "unique" situation. He worried it was still uncertain that the European Council would set a date in December to begin accession negotiations or that negotiations would be left open-ended rather than designed to anticipate eventual accession. Dutch POLDIR Hugo Siblesz told Ambassador Sobel on October 27 that Gul did not appear to understand that pressing the EU at this point to go beyond the EC report was a non-starter; if anything, he said, the European Council's decision would be even "narrower" than anticipated by the report. Siblesz added that FM Bot also had been up front in warning Gul to stop complaining about Turkey's "unique" treatment by the EU -- Turkey is a unique country with a unique set of circumstances that must be taken into consideration. Gul might have ultimately agreed to keep Turkey's worries in private EU channels, but he reminded the Dutch that Turkish public opinion must also be taken into account. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Hannie Pollman-Zaal, MFA director for western and central Europe, told the DCM on October 27 that the Gul meeting was "good and open" and that he understands the bottom line answer will be a "yes" reflecting the Commission report and drawing language from it. The Turks might not like some of the language, Pollman predicted, adding that in her estimation they seemed resigned to living with it. Turkish Ambassador Ildem separately told DCM he understood that "this is the ballast we need to keep the "yes" from being swamped by skeptics in the EU." Pollman said Gul came into the Bot meeting with a list of complaints about the Commission report and seemed ready to go public with them, Pollman-Zaal said. Pollman added that the Dutch had "objectively explained to the Turks that they should abandon plans for a public push-back campaign" since it would not play well to the EU 25 decision makers or publics.

13. (C) "Turkey also has a public opinion to take into account," Gul reportedly warned the Dutch, according to Sule Gurel (protect), first secretary at the Turkish Embassy and notetaker at the Gul/Bot meeting who shared her notes with Poloff on October 27. She confirmed that Gul's EU strategy was now to express Turkey's concerns "privately," that is, choosing to share them closely with the EU Presidency (the Dutch), not more openly with the press or even other member states at this time. Gul's concerns about the report's procedures included especially those for "permanent safeguards" and the "braking mechanism," she said.

14. (C) Gurel reported that Gul asked the Dutch to ensure a start date for negotiations including "a clear prospect of membership," signaling that Turkey had problems with the Commission's formulation for "open ended negotiations." Pollman predicted to the DCM that "the starting date will be the very last thing the Council will decide, after the operative decision language is hammered out." Pollman indicated that elements of a draft a draft "paragraph" are making the rounds in the EU and had been discussed -- although not necessarily shared -- with Gul. Pollman allowed that the paragraph put on the table at the Council meeting in December "might not be the one that comes out of the meeting." Pollman concluded that she has wagered with colleagues that the European heads will need a second Council (she guesses December 22) because they will be unable to come to consensus on Turkey at the December 17 EU Summit.

15. (C) Gurel revealed that her Embassy's assessment of the Council's December decision is that it will include unpalatable elements for Turkey, including the "open-ended" negotiations and "permanent safeguards." She confirmed that Turkey was aware that others (like the USG) believed Turkey "should take yes for an answer" and be prepared to move on past December. The packaging of the Council's decision had to be just right, she cautioned. (Comment: As one Dutch colleague put it, "It is like an invitation to a meal; Turkey should be glad to have been invited to the table and not complain about what is served, even if there are unsavory bits on the plate.") Gul and Bot concluded the meeting by agreeing to stay in "regular" contact, aiming for the November 24 EU Troika with Turkey and the November 29-30 EUROMED meeting, both in The Hague.

16. (C) Speaking with Poloff on October 29, Pollman asked if the USG would share with the Dutch what we had heard or learned from other EU member states regarding their feelings about the accession process, this as a way to help the Dutch strategize the end game negotiation. At the same time, she asked if the USG were planning any new diplomatic initiatives on Turkey before December, gently reminding that U.S. reticence on the subject would play best to the EU at this critical time.

17. (C) Finally, on Cyprus, Pollman said the Dutch were handling the Government of Cyprus very carefully in the weeks before December's Council. This meant the Dutch would not be pressuring them on the trade package issue until after the December 17 Council resolved Turkey accession. "The Turkey question is very serious for Cyprus," she said, "and they see the trade issue the same way. We do not want to give them too much to handle at one time."
SOBEL